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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there are differences in perceptions of the university environment between married male students and single male students. Seventy-five upperclass male students were selected at random from the university's single on-campus, single off-campus, and married off-campus undergraduate population. All of the married undergraduate male students (N-53) on-campus were selected for the study. Over 72 percent of the students selected responded. The College and University Environment Scales (CUES) was the instrument used. The results were reported in 5 dimensions describing the environment: (1) practicality, (2) awareness, (3) propriety, (4) community, and (5) scholarship. The results suggested that the students in the 4 groups measured perceived the university environment similarly. Marriage or the student's place of residence did not seem to have a differential effect on his perception. (AF)

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A COMPARISON OF PERCEPTION OF THE UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT BY UNDERGRADUATE MARRIED AND SINGLE MALE STUDENTS

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The last decade has seen an increased concern in the kinds of environments present on the campuses of colleges and universities in the United States. Research in college student personnel work has attempted to assess these environments within and across campuses by acquiring the perceptions of the environments by students and faculty.

Many studies have assembled myriad combinations of student and faculty groups for comparison of environmental perceptions. However, the married student, whose perception of the environment should be of interest to student personnel workers, has not been included in recent studies of environmental press. This group of students is increasing in percentage each year and is a significant subgroup on most campuses.

Dressel (1963) reported that a majority of married students were not satisfied with their degree of participation in the activities of the college environment. Others have reported that married students choose not to participate in the services and activities offered to them by the university (Dressel, 1965; Lantague, 1962; Rogers, 1958; Yamamoto, 1965). This neglected group of students may

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perceive the environment differently than other students in the university.

If the environment influences behavior and development, as most student personnel workers believe, then it is important to understand the perceived environment of all students influenced by university environment. The purpose of this study was to determine whether there are differences in perceptions of the university environment between married male students and single male students. These two groups were divided into on-campus and off-campus to see if location in the environment also might have an influence on perception as has been suggested by other studies (Baker, 1966; Lindahl, 1967), although not all investigators have found this to be true (Conner, 1966).

Method

Subjects

The subjects were drawn from the undergraduate students (except freshmen) at a large midwestern university. Seventy-five upperclass male students were selected at random from the university's single on-campus, single off-campus, and married off-campus undergraduate populations. All of the married undergraduate male students (N=53) on-campus were selected for the study. Seventy-two and one-half percent of the students selected responded to a letter requesting their assistance in the study.[1]

The Instrument

The instrument used for this study was the College & University Environment Scales (CUES) (Pace, 1963, revised 1969). The CUES inventories the students' perception of the college environment. It consists of 100 statements about college life-features and facilities of the campus, rules and regulations, faculty, curricula, instruction and examinations, student life, extra curricular organizations, and other aspects of the institutional environment which help to define the atmosphere or intellectual-social-cultural climate of the college as the students see it.

The results are reported in five dimensions describing the environment.

1. Practicality. A practical instrumental emphasis in the environment. Procedures, personal status, and practical benefits are important.

2. Awareness. A concern and emphasis upon three sorts of meaning-personal, poetic, and political. An emphasis upon self-understanding, and reflectiveness.

3. Propriety. An environment that is polite and considerate. Caution and thoughtfulness are evident. Group standards of decorum are important.

4. Community. A friendly, cohesive, group-oriented campus. Feelings of group welfare and loyalty.

5. Scholarship. Emphasis is on competitively high academic achievement and serious interest in scholarship.

The environmental perceptions of the groups can be compared on these five dimensions.

Data Analysis

The three general null hypotheses tested were that there are no significant differences among perceptions of the following groups of students on any of the scales of the CUES.

1. Off-campus married students: on-campus married students: off-campus single students: on-campus single students.

2. All married students: all single students.

3. All off-campus students: all on-campus students.

The significance of differences among group means on each scale for the first hypothesis was tested by the Analysis of Variance Technique. The nature of any significant differences were further investigated by Scheffe's method of multiple comparisons (Ferguson, 1966).

The second and third hypotheses were tested by *t* tests of the mean difference on each scale.

The .05 level of confidence was required for rejection of each null hypothesis tested.

Results

The means, standard deviations, and results of tests of significance for the four groups are presented in Table 1. Differences among means of the groups were not found on any of the scales. Therefore, it was not necessary to conduct the Scheffe test.

Insert Table 1 about here

The rank order of the scales was almost identical for all of the groups. The Practicality scale was ranked highest and the Propriety scale was ranked lowest by all of the groups. Scholarship, Community, and Awareness were clustered between Practicality and Propriety with similar rank order between the groups.

The means, standard deviations, and results of tests of significance between the means of the married students and single students and the results of the on-campus and off-campus students comparison are presented in Table 2. There were no significant differences between the means on any of the scales for either comparison.

Insert Table 2 about here

None of the null hypotheses could be rejected; therefore the conclusion that there was no significant differences in perception as measured by the five scales under each of the three nulls was accepted.

Discussion

These results suggest that the students in the groups measured all perceive the university environment similarly. The fact that a student is married does not influence his perception of the university environment to be different from

a single student's perception. Also, the student's place of residence does not seem to have a differential effect on his perception.

These findings might be explained by the fact that both single and married students are describing what the university environment is, not what it should be. Other studies reporting married students dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the environment lead the writer to suggest that study should be done to determine if married and single students differ on what the environment should be.

The similarity in the ranking of the groups on the five scales is very revealing. Similarity in ranking of perceptions has been found in other studies using different student subgroups (Berdie, 1967; Centra, 1965). It appears that the ranking by the students of the total university environment will be similar no matter what criterion is used to classify the subgroups.

All groups ranked Practicality the highest. This result lends support to other studies that show the press for practicality in higher education (Hesket & Walsh, 1969; Wilson & Dollar, 1970). The findings suggest an environment characterized by enterprise, organization, material benefits, and social activities. There are both vocational and collegiate emphases. There is some personal benefit and prestige to be obtained by operating within the system.

The ranking of Propriety last also is consistent with studies (Hesket & Walsh, 1969; Wilson & Dollar, 1970) that indicate this trend. This indicates an environment where group standards of decorum are relatively unimportant. The environment is not one that is mannerly, considerate, polite, and conventional. Caution and thoughtfulness are not evident.

Similarity in ranking among the different groups would tend to make one believe this perceived environment must be close to reality. The university needs to assess the environment as perceived by its student body and subgroups within that body to determine if this perception is parallel to those goals set forth in the mission and purposes of the institution.

Further study should be done to attempt to gain the perceptions of smaller units of the environment to gain more than what appears to be a generalized remote perception. One approach would be to gain perceptions of colleges, divisions, or even departments within the university by those most familar with these units.

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Footnote

[1]To obtain this percentage, it was necessary to send out three follow-up letters. The third included the instrument and a request to return it completed by mail.

TABLE 1

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Analysis of Variance

for the Four Groups on the Five CUES Scales

	Group										
	Married off-campus N= 55		Married on-campus N= 40		Single off-campus N= 46		Single on-campus N= 52		Within groups	Between groups	F
Scale	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Practicality	10.47	2.90	11.12	2.93	10.24	2.47	10.52	2.69	7.74	6.00	0.77*NS
Scholarship	8.91	4.53	8.88	4.58	8.13	4.26	8.79	4.26	19.84	6.29	0.32 NS
Community	8.29	3.19	8.35	3.68	8.11	3.42	8.67	3.13	11.37	2.75	0.24 NS
Awareness	8.13	4.27	8.35	4.40	7.42	4.34	7.87	4.04	18.49	7.26	0.39 NS
Propriety	5.87	2.74	6.10	2.84	6.96	2.99	5.87	3.05	8.62	12.74	1.48 NS

*NS = Not Significant

TABLE 2

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t Ratios for

Married v. Single and Off-Campus v. On-Campus Comparisons

	Scales									
	Practicality		Scholarship		Community		Awareness		Propriety	
Group	Mean	t	Mean	t	Mean	t	Mean	t	Mean	t
	SD		SD		SD		SD		SD	
MS N = 95	10.75		8.90		8.32		8.22		5.97	
	2.92		4.53		3.38		4.30		2.77	
		0.90 NS*		0.65 NS		0.19 NS		0.92 NS		0.97 NS
SS N = 98	10.39		8.48		8.41		7.66		6.38	
	2.58		4.25		3.27		4.17		3.05	
OfC N = 101	10.37		8.56		8.21		7.80		6.37	
	2.70		4.41		3.28		4.29		2.89	
		1.04 NS		0.42 NS		0.67 NS		0.44 NS		0.94 NS
OnC N = 92	10.78		8.83		8.53		8.08		5.97	
	2.80		4.38		3.36		4.19		2.95	

*NS = Not Significant

MS = Married Students, SS = Single Students, OfC = Off-Campus Students, OnC = On-Campus Students